

Message Text

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11

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SUBJECT: PRESS COVERAGE OF WHITLAM'S WASHINGTON VISIT

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S WASHINGTON VISIT RECEIVED EXTENSIVE BUT NOT OVERWHELMING PRESS COVERAGE IN THE MAY 9TH AND 10TH EDITIONS OF AUSTRALIA'S LEADING NEWSPAPERS. THE COVERAGE WAS FACTUAL AND NOT ENTIRELY FAVORABLE. THIS, COUPLED BY THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT FORD RECEIVED A NUMBER OF OTHER COMMON-WEALTH LEADERS LAST WEEK AND THE HEADLINE STORIES ABOUT THE SITUATION

IN CAMBODIA WHICH UNDERCUT MANY OF WHITLAM'S VIEWS ON INDOCHINA, HAVE REDUCED SOMEWHAT THE FAVORABLE DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT ON WHITLAM'S CALL ON THE PRESIDENT. ON RETURNING TO CANBERRA MAY 11 WHITLAM COMMENTED TO PRESS THAT AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. HAD NEVER BEEN HEALTHIER. END SUMMARY.

2. MOST LEADING AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPERS FEATURED WHITLAM'S SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB IN THEIR MAY 10TH EDITIONS. A REPRESENTATIVE STORY IS THE ONE IN THE AUSTRALIAN, WHICH, UNDER A SMALL HEADLINE TITLED WHITLAM SEES THE U.S., AS THE WORLD'S LAST, BEST HOPE STATES:

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3. QTE. AUSTRALIA STILL SEES AMERICA AS THE LAST BEST HOPE IN THE WORLD, THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. WHITLAM SAID IN A MAJOR SPEECH AIMED AT LIFTING U.S. MORALE FOLLOWING THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA....HE SPOKE TO HIS AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS LIKE AN OPTIMISTIC HEADMASTER. END QTE. THE REST OF THIS AND SIMILAR STORIES CONTAIN EXCERPTS FROM WHITLAM'S SPEECH AS WELL AS COMMENTS TO PRESIDENT FORD AND OTHER ADMINISTRATION FIGURES WHICH STRESS THAT THE U.S. WILL STAND BESIDE ITS ALLIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

4. OTHER STORIES FILED FROM WASHINGTON PAINT A SOMEWHAT LESS OPTIMISTIC PICTURE AND PORTRAY THE PRIME MINISTER IN A LESS FLATTERING LIGHT. THE SYDNEY DAILY TELEGRAPH OF MAY 9 RAN A STORY ON PAGE 11 ENTITLED, U.S. HEDGES OVER TREATY. THE STORY GOES ON TO SAY:

5. QTE. PRESIDENT FORD HAS GIVEN MR. WHITLAM A GUARDED WARNING THAT THE UNITED STATES MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FULFILL COMMITMENTS WITH ITS ALLIES....THE PRESIDENT SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME DETAILING THE DIFFICULTIES HE WAS HAVING WITH CONGRESS. HE STRESSED THE IMPLICATIONS OF CONGRESS'S REJECTION OF THE VIETNAM AID REFUGEES BILL LAST WEEK....OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT MR. FORD WAS USING THE SITUATION TO STRESS THAT A MILITARY ACTION INVOLVING EITHER AUSTRALIA OR NEW ZEALAND MIGHT NOT HAVE IMMEDIATE SUPPORT UNDER THE ANZUS TREATY IF CONGRESS CHALLENGED THE COMMITMENT. END QTE.

6. THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD'S EDITION OF MAY 10 CARRIES A FRONT PAGE STORY ENTITLED: QTE. U.S. WANTS INNER QTE GREATER EFFORT END INNER QTE BY AUSTRALIA. END QTE. IT SAYS: QTE. THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION WANTED AUSTRALIA TO MAKE A GREATER HUMANITARIAN EFFORT TO HELP VIETNAM REFUGEES, A LEADING CONGRESSMAN, DR. THOMAS MORGAN, SAID YESTERDAY. HE ALSO WARNED THAT STRONG ALLIES OF THE U.S., LIKE AUSTRALIA, WOULD HAVE TO BE MORE SELF-DEPENDENT IN DEFENSE...HE REVEALED U.S. DISSATISFACTION WITH AUSTRALIA'S REFUGEE EFFORT AFTER AUSTRALIA'S PRIME MINISTER, MR. WHITLAM SPENT 65 MINUTES IN AN INFORMAL MEETING WITH HIS COMMITTEE. MR. WHITLAM QUICKLY DISCOVERED THAT THE COMMITTEE DID NOT SHARE HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OPTIMISTIC VIEW THAT THE COMMUNIST VICTORIES IN INDO-CHINA WOULD NOT AFFECT STABILITY IN OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY SOUTH KOREA...END QTE. THE MAY 10TH MELBOURNE AGE CARRIES A STORY ON PAGE 6 ENTITLED, I DON'T KNOW OF KHMER ATROCITIES:PM WHICH STATES QTE. THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER (MR. WHITLAM) YESTERDAY TOLD THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB HIS GOVERNMENT HAD NO DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNIST ATROCITIES IN CAMBODIA. HE ALSO WOULD NOT DEFINE

AUSTRALIAN POLICY ON ADMISSION OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES.
END QTE. THE STORY SAID THAT MR. WHITLAM DID NOT REPLY DIRECTLY TO SEVERAL OTHER QUESTIONS INCLUDING: WHAT IS AUSTRALIA'S POLICY TOWARDS VIETNAMESE REFUGEES? WILL YOU APPROVE THE USE OF AUSTRALIAN PORTS BY NUCLEAR WARSHIPS? DO YOU FORESEE ANY ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT THE POWER VACUUM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA? FURTHER ALONG THE ARTICLE SAYS:

7. QTE....HE STUCK TO HIS BASIC THEMES AT THE CLUB ON THURSDAY BUT IT WAS JUST NOT HIS DAY: FROM THE INTRODUCTORY REMARK THAT A LOCAL RADIO ANNOUNCER HAD CALLED HIM E GO WHITLAM TO THE WIND-UP WHEN THE CLUB PRESIDENT PRESENTED HIM WITH A WIND-JACKET.

8. QTE. MR. WHITLAM IN HIS FINELY CHISELED PREPARED TEXT ADVISED THE UNITED STATES TO BE MAGNANIMOUS IN DEFEAT AND ACCEPT HIS ASSESSMENT THAT THERE WERE NO MORE DANGERS IN WOUTH-EAST ASIA.

9. QTE. BUT HE WAS SPEAKING JUST AS THE NEW YORK TIMES WAS DISTRIBUTING DISPATCHES FROM SYDNEY SCHANBERG DESCRIBING HOW THE KHMER ROUGE IS FORCING FOUR MILLION CAMBODIANS FORM CITIES OUT INTO THE COUNTRY.

10. QTE. WHILE MR. WHITLAM WAS URGING FOR HELP IN REBUILDING PUBLIC FACILITIES IN INDO-CHINA THE KHMER ROUGE WAS CLEARING HOSPITALS IN AN EVACUATION WHICH ACCORDING TO SOME AUTHORITIES AMOUNTED TO GENOCIDE.

11. THE CAMBODIAN NEWS DAMAGED HIS CONTENTION THAT THE NEW RULERS IN INDO-CHINA WERE REALLY NICE FELLOWS IF YOU'D ONLY RECOGNIZE THEM AND WORK WITH THEM. MR. WHITLAM HAD TO ADMIT THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON INSIDE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAMBODIA DESPITE HAVING RECOGNIZED THE NEW GOVERNMENT.
END QTE.

12. THE AGE MAKES THE CASE VEN HARDERY BY RUNNING A STORY ON LEE KUAN YEW'S STATEMENT AT THE WHITE HOUSE RIGHT BESIDE THE STORY ON WHITLAM. THE SOTRY ON LEE KUAN YEW CARRIES HIS ASSESSMENT THAT THE AMERICAN DEFEAT IN VIETNAM WAS AN UNMITIGATED DISASTER WHICH HELD GRAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR ASIA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD, AS WELL AS HIS CRITICISM OF THOSE WHO ARGUE THAT SINCE INDO-CHINA WAS NOT AMERICA'S IN THE FIRST PLACE, NOTHING WAS LOST.

13. ON RETURNING TO CANBERRA MAY 11 PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM COMMENTED TO THE PRESS THAT AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. HAD NEVER BEEN HEALTHIER, AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO

COUNTRIES HAD NEVER BEEN CLOSER OR MORE SOUNDLY-BASED. IN THIS FORMULATION WHITLAM WAS USING ALMOST THE SAME LANGUAGE USED BY THE AMBASSADOR IN HIS SPEECH TO THE ASIA SOCIETY IN NEW YORK ON MARCH 12. WHITLAM WILL GIVE A FULLER ACCOUNT OF HIS TRIP IN A TV ADDRESS IN A FEW DAYS.

14. COMMENT: THE STORIES ABOUT THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA WHICH ARE HEADLINED IN MOST AUSTRALIAN DAILIES MAKE IMPLICIT THE EXPLICIT CRITICISM OF WHITLAM'S SPEECH IN THE AGE. THESE STORIES, COUPLED WITH REPORTS ABOUT THE PRESIDENTIAL TALKS WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER COMMONWEALTH LEADERS, HAVE DILUTED SOMEWHAT THE FAVORABLE POLITICAL IMPACT WHITLAM WOULD NORMALLY GET FROM A CALL ON THE PRESIDENT, AND THE OPPOSITION WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS WHEN DEBATE ON AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY RESUMES IN PARLIAMENT ON MAY 13.
GREEN

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